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THE END OF FEAR

THE END OF FEAR



Denis Saurat

with a preface by
Philip Mairet

and a commentary by
Neil Montgomery

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Preface



There are moments, which once or oftener may happen to a man, when he catches a glimpse of himself that reveals a singleness, a pattern of unity in all his striving and experience. In this flash of self-understanding, he feels that he is near to knowing something about all men, something of the nature of mankind.

Experience of this kind, though always important and usually connected with significant changes in the personal fate, is seldom made manifest to others, for few have the concentration to retain it or the ability, poetic or philosophic, to give it enduring form. It is for this reason that M. Denis Saurat's *La Fin de la Peur* is a piece of writing of rare psychological value.

The work describes, in semi-dramatic form, a situation in which a man who is equally a poet, a psychologist and a metaphysician finds those three aspects of life, to which he has given his divided attention, brought together into one focus, at a time when certain events in his life coincide with a mysterious renewal of the force of life within him. His father has just died, and he has returned to his parents' home to comfort the bereaved mother; leaving the city in which, a man of middle age, he has brought up children of his own and realized certain ambitions in the world of letters. Whilst the old Pyrenean peasant woman talks to him of the dead father, the affairs of relatives, her experiences in the Great War and of her own childhood in the mountains, his soul is immersed again in that timeless world which Goethe, we are told, used to enter with his incantatory phrase 'The Mothers, the Mothers!' Listening to her vivid conversation, full of the wholesome realism, the harsh experience and the indomitable love of life lived in direct communion with the soil, the philosopher finds

himself drawn back into the deepest roots of his own thought and imagination.

Gradually, remembering a whole series of his dreams in childhood and in later years, he becomes aware that the being who dreams within him is, in some obscure but unquestionable sense, the same being whom he now perceives in the mother, accepting the harsh struggle with nature and circumstance in single devotion to the cause of life itself. And then comes a more startling understanding. In the recurring patterns of the dreams themselves he discerns the matrix of those intellectual conceptions which came to him as inspirations, shaping his destiny as a thinker and poet in the world of imagination and ideation. Finally, after the long conversation between mother and son, grief, fear and the bitterness of memories are all resolved in a new understanding between them; peace is attained with a new perception that courage is not an artificial acquirement, but is of the very nature of the living soul and more real than death itself.

How closely this brief philosophic drama records an immediate experience of its author is not precisely known to the present translator. The discerning reader will recognize it, however, as a product of living experience, as much a human document as an artistic creation. And although the picture of Pyrenean life, the curious war experiences and the portrait of the mother could stand by themselves as no small achievement of literary art, the unity and psychological purpose of the whole can only be fulfilled so far as the reader finds it the mirror, in some sort, of his own inner mystery.

The translator's thanks are due to Dr. Neil Montgomery, who, independently and unknown to him, prepared a rough translation for private use at the same time, which has been made use of in preparing the text that follows. Dr. Montgomery's essay upon this work is reprinted at the end of the book, as an aid to the understanding of its relation to other works of M. Saurat.

PHILIP MAIRET

Characters



THE FATHER, born in 1865, at l'Ayrolle, a hamlet of ten houses in the eastern part of the Pyrenees (Ariège.) Came to T—, a small town of 3,000 inhabitants, amongst the hills of the Ardennes, in 1896, owing to his wife inheriting a small property there. Died at T— in 1936.

THE MOTHER, born at l'Ayrolle in 1868, came to T— in 1896.

THE AUNT (from whom the property came): aunt of the Mother, died in 1896.

THE DAUGHTER, born at T— in 1897, died during the German occupation in 1915.

THE SON, born at Toulouse in 1890, himself has a son and daughters.

The Scene



At T—, in 1936, during the week following the death of the Father.

Throughout the colloquy between the mother and the son, the question in debate is whether the father still exists, and what sort of existence may still be his; the question for the son is how we come by our ideas of death.

The Closing of the Eyes



THE MOTHER: All country folk know, if the dying close their eyes themselves, and you don't have to do it for them, it means they are at peace.

When they keep their eyes open, that means they're not happy, and they'll come and fetch someone to keep them company.

That's why it's best to close their eyes as soon as they die, before they know it. Then they do not come back.

But I—I wanted him to come back for me—I wanted to go with him: and now he has closed his eyes himself. He loved me too much; he never wanted me hurt: forbade me even to go out into the yard when it was cold.

Oh, come back and fetch me. I'll be so good to you, better than ever I was.

You never left me before; don't, don't leave me now here alone. We have been together all the way, how can I go on now; however shall I be able to die without you: there's that last bit to travel, how can I face it alone. You have been with me always, you ought to have waited for me; oh, come back and take me with you!

But no, I know he won't come: he loved me too much on earth.

Cats



(*The Father is laid out on the bed ready for the coffin and the last vigil.*) THE MOTHER: We must be careful to keep the windows well shut. If we don't the cats will come in. That's why I never could endure cats.

If you're not careful, when the dead are alone, the cats come and eat their faces: it's just fresh meat to them. They caught the cat at it in Toulouse, and they killed her and put her in the coffin with the body.

Touching the Dead



THE MOTHER (*to the Son*): You must let your daughter see him dead: else he might come and look for her. The mountain-folk, they bring the children and make them touch the dead body, so that he shan't come and look for them. But there—that's their stupidity. You mustn't touch the dead, because where you do, the flesh turns black.

It's enough if the children see them, to show that they love them, that they're not afraid of them; and then the dead are satisfied. The dead don't like you to be afraid of them.

But of course she must go to the cemetery, or he might come back for her.

Quarrels



THE MOTHER (*to the Son*): The children used to think we were quarrelling about this, that, or the other. Little they knew!

While the mouth speaks this or that, it is the heart that rages.

It is the heart that kills you.

We were both unhappy, because our daughter was dead and you had gone.

Then each would accuse the other of anything, to make the other suffer. When one suffers, one always wants to make the other suffer, and the more miserable one is, the more one wants him to suffer too.

And, you know, the wicked things you say, they hurt you more than they hurt the other.

Poor man, how miserable I made him with my wicked tongue! I deserved it cut out, my wicked tongue.

And he too, sulky and revengeful, he would say anything he could think of in revenge at me. Poor man, he would call me *puto*, and well he knew that it wasn't true, and it hurt him more than me. It rather amused me to hear him say that, but it made him unhappy—because he knew it was not true—he was trying to make me angry.

And then I'd say to him, 'Now you're sulking,' and he'd stop sulking. And I'd say 'You hot-head,' but I was the hot-head, really.

Insults



THE MOTHER: You know so-and-so, she too has lost her husband, and also from a stroke. Nearly dead, he was, and they made him swallow some medicine, and he rallied and cried out: ‘You filth, oh you bitch, you’ve poisoned me!’

She: Oh, you still speak! And I thought you were dead: oh swear at me as much as you will, I’m so happy; insult me as much as you like.

A Swine of a Heart



THE MOTHER: A swine of a heart I've got, to hold out still,
and I was hoping it would break: and it is his that broke.

Cicero



THE MOTHER: Oh, I have sung him the four *catarinas*, time and time again!

THE SON: Why, what is that, the four *catarinas*?

THE MOTHER: That's what they say in the countryside when one has been swearing at someone. That one sang him the four *catarinas*.

THE SON (*to himself*): The four Catiline orations of Cicero. Even now, after nearly two thousand years, they are still proverbial among the Pyrenees. And one *sings* them, too; the intonation of the Latin still haunts the ear of the peasants of Gaul.

Politeness



THE MOTHER: You know, so-and-so, before he croaked—or rather, passed away—since he never did me any harm, I shouldn't say croaked—one ought to be polite to those who've never done one any harm. . . .

THE MOTHER (*to the grandson*): Take this money and go and get some bread; it's gone up a penny. Everything's going up, nothing goes down: It's only your poor grandfather who's going down.

Thieves and Murderers



THE MOTHER: So-and-so—I don't think he's thief enough to be called a thief; he might take a chicken or an apple, but he wouldn't steal a cow or a tree.

Another: You know, he's a thief and has killed a man; but he's good at heart; he's never really wronged anyone; you know, there's a difference. . . .

Calamities



THE MOTHER: I am the one for calamities; nothing else is worth taking notice of. Whenever things went successfully—well—there it was, I thought no more about it. Happiness is nothing, really.

Esquicha la vida—Wear and tear. Wear it away, tear it away. That is all there is to life.

The Father's Illness



THE MOTHER: How dirty things had got in that little front room, and how we longed to be in clean things! Of course, we had kept all the best linen to die in. At least we wanted those who laid us out to find us clean. I said to him: 'Will you have the strength to go as far as the end of the passage?'

'Aye, you'll help me a bit and I'll lean against the wall.' And so we went along together, though I was as ill as he was, without a light, in the pitch dark, right along the passage: for I wanted to put him in the big room at the back, nice and clean.

Poor thing, he fell down, and I put myself forward and he fell on me, and we lay there minutes without moving, dead-like, in the dark.

Presently I got my courage back.

'Are you dead?'

'No,' he said.

Then I took heart again. If he hadn't answered, I'd have lain there and died of sheer wretchedness, there under him: but to hear him say No gave me courage a little, and I stirred myself and drew my body from under him very gently so as not to hurt him.

After that, I got him on his feet more or less, and we went on, and he fell three or four times more. What a relief it was when I got him settled in the good bed, in the big back room, and when I'd lit the stove and settled myself in the good arm-chair.

And then, in the morning, towards three o'clock, he had the stroke.

Jealousy

THE MOTHER: That anyone else should have put anything to his mouth, I could never have borne it.
Nor that anyone should touch him.
The doctor, of course, I had to let him, but the others, no,
I couldn't have borne it.
Doctors don't count.

In my Aunt's Days



THE MOTHER: In the days when my aunt was alive, I used to go into Belgium to buy the bread because it was a halfpenny cheaper in Belgium. It took two hours to go and two hours to come back. And my aunt made me walk it barefoot, for otherwise it would have used up more than a half-pennyworth of shoeleather, so she said.

(*To the Son*): She used to tell me that with one walnut you had enough nourishment for four days.

A quarter of a walnut a day, she would say, is plenty to nourish a child of your age.

She was a clever woman, my aunt: she had been a midwife: she didn't know how to read or write, but her husband was a ranger and had taught her a little.

But she was very clever: they had given her medals for vaccination, she had vaccinated so many people in these parts.

But I, I was afraid that with only a quarter of a walnut a day your bowels might grow too small, and so I fed you well; and I gave you a penny every day to go and buy yourself a *brioche*.

And the baker, he came to me and said, 'Do you know, Madam, that your little boy is stealing money from you? Every day he comes to me to buy a *brioche*.'

The fool, he had never heard of a thing like that.

As if I would have let myself be robbed of money.

Still, it was honest of him to come and tell me.

The War in Spain



My aunt, she had married a ranger, on the Spanish frontier; that was a good situation he had.

But one day, when there was a war in Spain, as there is to-day, her man, who was armed, arrested ten Spaniards, and they were armed and they were trying to pass over into Spain to go and fight the other Spaniards.

But these men, they hadn't dared to kill him, because he was French. So he had arrested them and led them to the guard-house, and all of them were put in prison.

Then his chiefs, in the government, thought it over, and they saw that if they left this ranger there, one day they would find him dead with a knife in his stomach because Spaniards always remember and always get their man, and they know how to use their knives.

So these government people, they thought where could they send him away from Spain as far as possible. And they found him a job as ranger on the frontier of Belgium, where there aren't any Spaniards.

That is how we came to be here; because, when the aunt was a widow, and alone, she sent for me to take care of her. And the King of Spain, he gave him a medal for it; it's still up in the loft, in a box, with a paper about it that he had framed. You can find it there, if you like.

The Pyrenees in the Nineteenth Century



THE MOTHER (*to the Son*): You know, when I was little, no one up in the mountains had ever seen white bread, nor wine. The first man who ever had a barrel of wine brought up was the postman, who lived on the road half-way up to the village, and had a bicycle. But much use it was to him, his bicycle, for coming up the mountain!

Every woman there baked the bread herself: and good black bread it was, very nourishing, very hard, and it kept a long time.

They took the wool of the sheep to Serres, when they had spun it at home; there was a factory there, where they made cloth. You gave them so much of the wool and out of the rest they made you a piece of cloth: and then the women made trousers and coats for the men, and skirts and bodices for themselves: the men knew how to make wooden clogs, and we lived that way.

What did we have to eat?

Chiefly potatoes, cabbage and beans: and we would kill a pig or a goose, and that lasted a long time. The salted fat made good soup—and the flesh we cured; we made good soup of it all mixed together, potatoes, cabbage and pork.

Carrots, chervil, leeks—we knew nothing of those; those are not mountain plants.

But we had plenty of fruit in season, apples and nuts which do you good and can be kept.

And then, of course, we had cows; all the milk you wanted; and they made good fresh cheese, as much as you would wish for; and how the children loved it!

We used to go to the market at Foix, that was half a day's walk: there we sold eggs, chickens and milk, sometimes a pig or a cow that we had to spare: then we came back again at night.

Sometimes we brought back a lot of money. We hid it in the houses; five-franc pieces and pieces of gold. Everybody had money.

But no one ever spent it. They kept it for later on, in case anything should happen.

If one wanted to buy land, for instance. Sometimes one wanted some land of a neighbour's.

But there was no need to buy land. The mountain belonged to us. Whoever wanted to make himself a field, he would choose a good place, cut down the trees, pull up the roots, and then he would work the land: or he would sow grass and make a meadow.

A young man who had nothing, because his parents were poor or he had too many brothers—he would go and make himself a field and would get married, and then they would fetch the mason to direct them, and everyone would help to build the house.

So there was land for everybody, and we used to say to idlers: '*Agez pos poou que terro te manquo!*' ('Don't be afraid; you'll not run short of land!')

Calamities



THE MOTHER: My mother-in-law—no woman ever had a mother-in-law like mine.

She made me cover my face with a cloth when I was giving the breast to the baby, so that it shouldn't get to know me: and I wasn't allowed to speak while I was near it.

You see, I had to go and work with the men. The child would have cried when I was away if it had loved me, so it mustn't be allowed to love me or even to know me.

And then they let it catch cold, and it died when it was seven months old.

Snakes—and a Camel



THE MOTHER: When I was young they sent me to Ax-les-Thermes, and there the roads were black with snakes: but you were taught not to be afraid of them: you took care to tread on their heads, and then they coiled round your ankle and died. But you had to make no mistake. If you trod on their tails, then they bit you.

Still, that wasn't very dangerous. There were doctors all over the town, and they had little knives ready in their pockets; and they would cut out that bit of flesh, and you didn't die.

My father, when he was young, was a miner in Spain, over towards Barcelona. Once he saw, he told us, a snake as thick as a tree and as long as a house. On the road!

And then an animal came along, a huge thing with a big hump, you know, what they call a camel. A man was leading it with a rope. And when the camel saw the snake, it jumped on it with all four feet. A camel is bigger than a horse, and heavier, because of the hump. And it just trampled the snake to death, on the spot. The men were helpless; they simply did not know what to do about it.

The Law



THE MOTHER: Once, I had come back from Toulouse with five hundred francs that we had saved, he and I, penny by penny; and in the middle of the night I heard my mother outside my window, crying fit to break her heart.

‘What’s the matter, Mother?’

Ah, my poor girl, that I should have to die. I’ve a law-suit with the family of that swine, your father, who married me when I was fifteen and he was penniless—and now they’ve gone to law with me and I’ve got to pay five hundred francs. I shall have to sell land to find them, those five hundred francs. And I don’t want to sell the land.

‘I’d rather kill myself; I’m going to throw myself in the river. I haven’t five hundred francs and I don’t want to sell the land. I’ll throw myself into the river.’

Then I cried too: to kill oneself for five hundred francs. I didn’t want it to be said that my mother killed herself for five hundred francs, and I having the money all the time. So I gave her the five hundred francs that we had scraped together halfpenny by halfpenny, my man and I.

And he, poor man, never said a word to me about it. He loved me too much.

Incompatibles



THE SON (*to himself*): Many a time, there is no possible compromise.

To the father and mother, it seems that the children have abandoned them. To the children, that is normal and necessary. It is even the result of the father's and the mother's love for the children.

What the mother calls 'your father's glory'—his ambition. No common point of view between the generations. Nor between France and Germany, or between France and England. The rational position imagined by intellectuals does not exist. Even the theory of it cannot be definitely thought out.

In practice, force decides—or cunning. The intellectual is thinking in a vacuum; his rational idea corresponds to no reality.

Reality is less rational than intelligence. Problems exist that are without solutions, a situation which the intellectual cannot understand. Thus, these two people could not come to an understanding with their children: no ground existed for such an understanding.

They could not agree between themselves, because of the father's 'glory', which made him continually do things that the mother could not approve—such as sending the son or daughter far away from them, to school. The mother gave in, because it is the man who takes decisions on behalf of the world without and of necessity: but in her heart she did not yield, she blamed the father for all their misfortunes, which would not have happened if the children had been kept at home.

Incompatibles: The Cure



THE CURE: The Good God was obliged to issue a commandment that children should love their parents.

It is not natural for children to love their parents.

But the Good God pronounced no commandment that parents should love their children; no commandment was needed.

It is natural; it is an instinct.

That is why parents and children can never agree.

The Dead



THE MOTHER: A man went out one night to relieve himself. His wife had been dead three days. In our villages, you know, there are no closets, you go outside, and at night you are afraid. You take a child with you, or a dog, or even the donkey, any living thing that keeps you company.

Because, at bottom, it's the dead you are afraid of in the dark. So that anything living, even a donkey, is a protection. But this man wasn't afraid; and he loved his wife very much. So he was weeping, all crumpled up in the dark.

And weeping, he prayed, saying softly to the dead woman: 'Come, oh come back to me.'

And all at once he heard a great shout a long way off: it was the voice of his dead wife, and she shouted: 'Arribi!' That's our word for 'I'm coming.'

He stopped, he listened, and he heard it again, nearer: 'Arribi!'

All at once he was seized with a mad fear; he pulled up his trousers and began to run towards the house; behind him someone was running faster and faster, and he got to the door just in time, shut the door, drew the bolt and collapsed as if dead, just inside the door.

He came to himself the next morning, and there was the mark of a hand on the door, as if it had been branded on with fire. All the village saw it.

The Dead: Terror, Disgust, Hope



THE SON (*to himself*): The greatest bother to easily-frightened peasants, and especially to their women folk, is the fact that their peasant modesty compels them to relieve themselves out of doors at night; and the fear of the dark is the fear of the dead. Whence arise strange associations: those whose love is stronger than their fear go and seek the dead at the usual places at midnight. Just there they feel is the best chance of seeing them again.

And their love is often stronger than their fear. Malinowski tells how the Trobrianders of the Pacific dig up the dead father after several weeks, open the decomposing leg and suck the marrow of the tibia, to their own great disgust and sometimes to their hurt.

In the great terror lies the great hope.

THE MOTHER: Your sister—how many times have I not run in the middle of the night to the bottom of the garden. I, who never dared to go there alone. It seemed to me that I should just catch her there, that I might see her again. But always it seemed to me that she had just gone, that next time I would catch her.

Or I would run at midnight to the cemetery to see if she came there. There was a German post on the way there, and the Germans, they thought I was mad.

Then a German soldier would come with me with his gun and his bayonet fixed, and we both looked through the cemetery railings, and I would call to her. But she never came.

The Three Days of the Illness



THE MOTHER: We had made such plans for being happy in our old age.

But the Good God, He made another plan, and He was quicker than we were. It lasted three days, His plan.

Calamities: The War



THE MOTHER: They were looking for gold. The German adjutant, he put a revolver to my forehead. I made a grab at that revolver and sent it right along the flag-stones of the path into the middle of the garden.

'Madam, you're mad,' he said to me.

'Yes, I am; but if I wasn't, you'd make me go mad.'

But I knew his revolver wasn't loaded: it was forbidden them to have bullets in their revolvers when searching houses.

Not that I cared, anyway. My daughter was dead; I wanted him to kill me.

The War: The German Corporal



The Mother tells the Story

The Corporal: You'll do as I tell you.

I: No, I will not.

He: I shall make you.

I: Then it's a fight, and when two fight, you never know which will be killed.

He: But you've no weapons.

I: You've stolen my revolver, thieves that you are, but you've left the best weapon of all—and here it is.

(I pulled out the axe from behind the door and held it under his nose.)

And your pistol, it isn't loaded. I know that you're not allowed to have it loaded. Off with you. You've got a good-looking head, but I'll make it into two heads if you don't go. Get out!

And he got out. So they had me up before a court martial; and then I said to the commandant:

Aren't you ashamed to come here and make war on old women. Go to the front; there you'll find your equals who'll know how to deal with you.

He: Madame, you must submit. The country is conquered.

I: No, sir, it isn't conquered; it is invaded but not conquered. You found no one here to defend it. But they are defending it down there, at the front. When you have beaten them the country will be conquered, but not before. Then why are you here? Go and fight with the armed men, and leave us alone. We are miserable enough already.

And they gave me eight days in prison.

The Court-Martial



THE MOTHER: And I told them:

‘Your corporal, I know that sort. In our country too there are blackguards who sleep under the bridges in Paris.

‘You have rounded up all the blackguards of Germany and brought them here to rob and bully. The honest men of Germany wouldn’t take on that kind of job.

‘The honest ones of the Germans are at the front, they’re fighting honestly against their equals; they don’t make war on old women.

‘And your corporal, if he comes to my house again, or I find him in my way, I’ll make him into two, your good-looking blackguard; there’ll be two good-looking blackguards for you then.

‘You can kill me if you like, that’ll do me a great service, for I’m too unhappy to live and I cannot kill myself; I’ve tried to, but I can’t; my daughter is dead.’

And I began to rave like a mad woman.

But they only gave me eight days in prison: and when I came out, the corporal had gone.

The Hidden Revolver



THE MOTHER: You know, the Germans, they were not bad. They used to look at you with their round, intelligent eyes, and it wasn't wise to try and fool them. The soldiers were just like us—they used to help us against the swine at the Kommandantur, whom they looked upon as just slackers with soft jobs.

When I had one of them in the house, a soldier from the front, he helped me against the police. They hated the military police as much as we did.

He had his mess-tin full of black coffee on the table: and he said to me:—‘Madame, a search again. If you've anything to hide, give it me! ’

Once he put ten gold pieces in the coffee in his mess-tin; the police were looking everywhere for gold.

But that was forbidden them, to touch anything that belonged to a soldier. The soldier, he said to me:—‘Do not worry, Madame, if he touches my mess-tin, that swine from the Kommandantur, I'll knock him down: and, you know, all my comrades will back me; don't you worry.’

The German soldiers billeted on us, they stood by us.

And when they found your father's revolver, by good luck there weren't any cartridges in it, but they took your father away. Fortunately, we had a soldier billeted on us then, and when your father had gone with the police, the soldier said to me:—

‘Madame, trust me, and we'll get him out of this; but they are coming again. Now, you've got some cartridges. If they find the cartridges he will be shot, or sent to a concentration camp at least. Trust me, madame; show me the cartridges. I'll save him for you.’

I looked at him, and saw that he was honest, so I showed him where the cartridges were, in a hole under a heap of

wood in the old tool-shed. He took them and pulled out the lead with a pair of pliers and threw the powder into the well, and the lead—there was a fire in the stove, so he threw the bullets in and piled on wood till they were melted, and you couldn't see what they had been. Then he put the copper cases in his pocket, and at night went out and threw them in the pond.

The police found nothing. Ten times they looked into that hole where the cartridges had been.

The War: Rape



THE MOTHER: And once, there was a German soldier who had raped a girl on the Belgian frontier; and all the other soldiers set upon him. They shut him up in a room in the estaminet, all privates; there wasn't even a corporal; and stretched him naked on the table, and all the soldiers filed past him with their belts off, and each one gave him three blows with the belt as hard as ever they could. After that, the girls were left alone.

The War: The Young Lieutenant



THE SON (*to the Mother*): I knew a young Breton lieutenant, who might be about nineteen, in command of his section, and they had taken some prisoners—a hundred or so.

Presently the Germans came back, and were about to take the lot. Then the boy sent two of his men towards the rear with ten of the German prisoners to try to save them, but he couldn't spare more than two men.

As soon as they were gone, he said to his soldiers, 'Kill all the Germans; all of us here are going to be killed.' So they killed all the other Germans excepting only the ten who had gone away with the two Frenchmen.

And the Germans attacked.

Soon the Germans had either killed or taken all of them, even the two Frenchmen and their ten prisoners, and that was how the whole thing came out. If he had not tried to save those ten, he wouldn't have been found out. And by then, his own leg had been carried off by a shell exploding. The German officer said to him: After what you've done, you don't expect us to nurse you, do you? So he had him put into a shell-hole, to let him bleed to death. Then those Germans continued their advance, and some others came by who knew nothing of what had happened. They found the French officer not yet dead in his shell-hole, and dressed his wound and had him taken away.

But the report of the first German officer followed him up, and they court-martialled him, that little Breton lieutenant with one leg missing—they had tended him well, without favour, though like a soldier, not like an officer.

And the court martial gave judgment in his favour: it was no fault for a soldier to do what he had done: he had even saved ten.

Later on, they exchanged him through Switzerland.

Reincarnation



THE MOTHER: In the countryside they have a saying:—
Efan perdit al cap de l'an efan rebengut.

A child that dies returns at the end of a year. That's why
you were called after your brother who died the year before.

Dreams and Reincarnations



THE MOTHER (*to the Son*): When your daughter came into the world, I knew it. I dreamt a dream, at the very same time, and woke with a loud cry that woke up your father, and we looked at the clock: you could ask him about it, only he's dead.

And then you wrote and you told us the time, and it was the same.

It was my own daughter, your sister who died, who came in my dream and said to me:—

‘Mother, you don't want any more children, and I want to come back into the world because I have been unhappy, and now I want to be happy.

‘Mother, if you wanted me I would come back, but you don't want any more children; you've been too unhappy in your children.

‘So now I am going to go into the body of a strange woman, my brother's wife, and I'll be his daughter since I can't be yours. But I don't want to do it unless you give me permission. Tell me quickly, there's only a few minutes left; if you say no, the child will come dead; if you say yes, it will be me and it will live; and I want to live, I want to be happy. O speak quickly!'

Then I shouted Go! Go! so loudly that I woke your father and awoke myself.

And then you wrote to say she was born at that very time, and she came with the cord wound right round her neck, but the doctor saw it directly and slipped his finger under and unwound it. But for that the child would have suffocated.

If I had not shouted ‘Go!’ it would have been too late.

Intuition and Action



THE SON (*to himself*): To know how people act;—that is necessary, if we are to judge their ideas. There is a close relation between my dreams and, for example, my mother's rebellion against the Germans: the impulse, the obstacle, the leap, the triumph. Also between my dreams and my mother's feelings at the time of my sister's or my father's death. Ancestral feeling, dreams, actions of the race or of the individual, and metaphysical ideas: different aspects of one and the same unity.

To attain it, try to encircle it, and then approach it from every side. Approach from one side only gives but little knowledge and no wisdom.

Approach from the intellectual side, in particular, yields almost nothing: for the intellect too quickly loses contact with the real. Therefore, it is necessary to use the intellect in connection with the other factors.

The other factors also, without the intellect, quickly fall into errors the most gross and obvious.

Dreams of the Son in Childhood



Dreams frequently repeated from about 8 years of age onwards, ceasing towards 11 years of age

The Mountain

A mountain, neither precipitous nor rocky, but which one climbs slowly for a very long time. Who is this ‘one’? Not I especially, but I can feel this ‘one’ climbing. A long convex curve, fairly regular in form. The air grows more and more invigorating, colder and colder. More rarified but more pure. Anguish: can one continue the climb? There is no physical discomfort; on the contrary, a sense of well-being and of strength; the higher one mounts the closer to the ground one clings, on all fours, although there are no precipices nor even any rocks; only grass, rather sparse and short, then snow, and then bare rock, but above all wind, wind blowing more and more powerfully. It is against the wind that one is advancing, and one comes to a very slightly descending slope before again facing the great ascending curve; no cause for disappointment; one knew this beforehand.

The wind is stronger and stronger. One climbs for hours certainly, perhaps for years.

One reaches the summit of the curve, and there, one feels the terror of a vast precipice, overlooking a whole continent, millions of feet below: one is clinging to the summit of the curve, flat on the stomach. There is no immediate danger; the precipice is far enough off, beyond a decline of not too steep a curve. The terror is in the imagination rather than fear or danger of a fall.

That is to the left.

To the right the mountain descends in a curve, but slightly,

for some hundred feet only; then another mountain rises powerfully, separated from the first by a saddle some hundred feet from the first summit; the saddle on one side must abut on the precipice, and on the other descend towards an invisible but inevitable plain.

One seems to have reached the limit of one's strength, the force of the wind is at its maximum; yet one descends slowly to the saddle; then climbs again on the other side to the height already attained, and there one is seized with a deeply blissful resolution to renounce all, to risk all, and one proceeds up the new slope with triumphant pride. Or perhaps, instead of the saddle between the two mountains, there is nothing.

Not an empty space into which one might fall, but just *nothing*. It depends upon the resolution of the climber, whether he can pass to the second slope. There is no obstacle but the wind, and the wind is not dangerous: powerful as it is, it threatens neither to carry one away nor overthrow one: it only measures the strength of one's advance.

The climber goes over to the second slope, across this nothing, which is not a precipice nor a possible fall: which is nothing but a change of plane, involving no risk but only a decision to be taken.

Upon the second summit—pride.

Sometimes beings, totally unknown, rare and different from the climber, are met upon the second slope. One is wholly at their mercy. They are not menacing: welcoming rather, and are related to a race which peoples the continent at the foot of the precipice to the left. They come from there, and send back messengers thither.

Sometimes one goes back again all the way to the base of the first mountain, to seek other beings one wants; then one comes again in a few hours, leading them to the inhabitants of the second mountain, after having persuaded the newcomers that the gap of nothingness can be passed.

The Sphere

A sphere, mathematically perfect and polished, moving by its own force in a straight course through a space apparently unlimited, in a milky light.

Then there appears, above, below, to right and to left, certain limits; a feeling of joy, as of a beginning of achievement.

Slowly these limits join to form a sort of vast funnel narrowing very gradually, into which the sphere proceeds with joy, still surrounded by very ample space.

Then the sides come nearer together, gradually, irresistibly: joy mounts higher, and anxiety develops simultaneously and, as it were, parallel with it, without any shocks. It is seen that the funnel will necessarily become too narrow, and what then? But the rate of diminution is slow, the fatal moment very far off. The light decreases, still milky but darkening.

The movement goes on, the joy and the fear growing in proportion as the sides come together: it goes on thus for hours, for life-times, eternally.

At last the maximum is reached. The funnel has narrowed at last to the exact measure of the sphere: both anguish and pleasure are at their maximum.

An eternal moment: the sphere and the limits are one. The funnel is a cylinder identical with the sphere.

Then, deliverance. The sphere has not passed through, but it is not crushed.

Movement continues in the same direction, in the same light. The sphere is clothed with the canal, and an infinite relief appears in the system thus constituted. Fear ends. Joy spreads itself in a kind of gentle explosion, flowing away in every direction.

Peace. The light vanishes, but is not replaced by darkness. Possibly the walls have yielded. Perhaps the sphere is adapt-

ing itself to the narrowing of the canal. But rather, the whole is transferred into a different world, in which the opposition between the sphere and the walls no longer exists. Perhaps a painless explosion has occurred; the world being transformed not exactly into another world but into an atmosphere of tranquil pleasure.

The anguish of knowing what is about to happen gives place to the desire of knowing what has happened, and then fear is resolved in endless tranquillity.

The Staircase

I am mounting a stairway without a baluster against the inside of the wall of a round tower. The stairway is fairly wide; no feeling of fear; no danger; I can hug the wall and leave between myself and the void a very great length, laterally, on each stair.

Dark: but light enough to guide oneself without apprehension.

I mount fairly fast, and easily, without loss of breath.

The breadth of the stairway lessens; but still no feeling of fear.

The well of the staircase is getting deeper and deeper, my feet are nearer and nearer to the abyss as the staircase narrows. Still no feeling of fear.

The stairway ends abruptly, with a last step just wide enough for me to stand upon; no feeling of danger.

Looking attentively in front of me, I see that the staircase goes on, on the other side of a void, at four or five lengths of the body, as though a landing four or five times the length of a man had once been there, or perhaps a now non-existent room; the stairs re-commencing from the further side.

Looking along the wall still more carefully, I see several stones jutting out here and there from the wall, below the level upon which I stand, without apparent order, but at first descending slightly and then re-ascending; others, irregularly, at my level. I stretch out a foot to the first of these lower stones; it is firm and will easily bear my weight. With the hand I reach for another stone higher up; and feel firm, not even too closely cramped against the wall. I see that, steadyng myself by holding to the stones above and passing from one to the other of the stones below, I can get over to the staircase opposite. No fear. No uneasiness even. The decision once taken is carried out without diffi-

culty; and, after several minutes of concentrated duration, at once very long—eternal—and normal, I reach the first step, very wide and comfortable, of the continuing stairway. Once up there, I look back at the void and the space just traversed. I am seized with fear, retrospectively. How was I able to do that? And with profound joy to have done it, for the question of returning does not arise, I go onward, trembling with fear and joy, easily to mount the stairway up to the summit of the tower, where everything is resolved.

*Dreamt by the Son
at Forty years of age, once only*



The Countess: the Little Girl

The Countess used to disappear from time to time. In the country she is suspected of some unknown and evil work; one day she is followed by the dreamer.

She is tracked into a very deep and narrow hole: the dreamer, in a state of anguish, but without difficulty, follows her, descending into a perfectly vertical shaft.

At last, at the bottom of the pit, a world of light: in a lofty cave, illumined by its own atmosphere only, peace emanates from everything. Numerous inhabitants, all happy. Here the Countess is carrying on an admirable work, not specified but perfect. The dreamer has lost sight of her since his entry into the narrow pit, and, on his arrival below, in his ecstasy, he sees her no more, does not even hear of her: she is too great a lady; he is only an anonymous spectator.

All around him is agitation, organization, a reception.

A little girl, whom he remembers having seen above in the terrestrial world, appears in the midst of strangers. This little girl had no existence in the former part of the dream: she only appears here, but awakens a very confident feeling in the dreamer that he has seen her before and knows her very well.

She is very shy and walks awkwardly with mechanical movements as though she were made of wood. He calls to her and caresses her; she seems pleased, loses her shyness, improves in her walk. Her gestures become easier. She is very dear to him, and he is very happy.

Already in this dream, towards the end, the symbol was appearing. The Countess was Life, the soul during life on earth. The narrow and agonizing pit is Death. In the happy world below, the dreamer has lost the countess, but finds a little girl whom he knows well without ever having seen her: his soul, still awkward, but which quickly sets itself to learn how to live in this new world.

In the half-awakened state, the symbol reveals itself fully, and connects itself with the meaning of other dreams: dreams of subterranean passages through which one worms one's way interminably, flat on one's belly, from which one has great trouble to emerge, but which one does get out of, with agony but without harm, and to which one desires to go back to thread one's way through again. Dreams of the mountain, of the sphere and of the staircase: a preparation, then a passage that is difficult, with a downward trend, then a leap or an explosion, and the arrival at an appeasement, at a solution.

In part, dreams of sexual penetration with liberation. More probably dreams of birth; with emergence from a narrow passage into light—the infant's memory of its birth, persisting throughout childhood; dreams that are vivid before the awakening of sex and partially replaced by the sexual life with its parallel rhythm; but also in part by the intellectual and literary life which has also this rhythm: research, difficulties, crisis of inspiration, blissful solution in the work of creation.

Memory of birth, premonition of sexuality and of inspiration, hope, and perhaps remembrance of a similar passage through death itself.

Dreamt by the Son at Forty-Five years of age, once only



The Guide

A well-lit cavern; the dreamer and a friend are descending a wide passage, obstructed by great stones and rubbish, earth, shingle, sand. They are seeking a way out. A feeling of compulsion, of the necessity of the search, its success being doubtful but possible. Somewhat distantly appears, very distinctly, a human form, enveloped in robes, and at first motionless. The dreamer and his friend continue to descend and approach this figure, without any emotion. They perceive at last that the figure is on the other side of an open space from which several passages radiate in different directions, some ascending and others descending.

The figure is a little way onward in one of the ascending passages, and is already at a higher level, so that in order to reach it one must scale a block of stone, in shape like the step of a stairway but higher than a man. A feeling that this is the guide to follow. Certitude.

The two companions address themselves to the climbing of this high boulder, each aiding the other. Reaching its summit, they see the figure has meanwhile gone higher up, into a passage now obscure, and is holding a lamp: turned towards them, awaiting them. They continue to go on and up, with great and growing difficulties. The figure always waits for them a little further on, but never allows them to approach it.

Consultation between the two companions: Is the guide friendly or inimical? Is he leading us to disaster?

Then, suddenly, their joint decision: It matters not; catastrophe is the same thing as success, we must follow. Im-

mense happiness at this decision. The figure allows them to approach nearer: they feel it to be benevolent in the midst of a danger which is terrible but without importance. Acceptance of death, death being triumph. All three closer together, the guide still veiled, continue to scale the boulders and to ascend the passage, and all three are happy.

Three Elements



THE SON (*meditates*): Certain metaphysical ideas which came to me between 18 and 25 years of age, and which were afterwards developed.

Certain dreams in childhood, which occurred between the ages of 8 and 11, frequently repeated, with but slight variations; three or four essential dreams, with one or two dreams occurring towards the age of 40, which are evidently the conclusion of the dreams of childhood.

I perceive, at about 45, that my metaphysical ideas, conceived from 18 to 25, are clearly contained in the very rhythm of the childhood dreams of 8 to 11.

I perceive afterwards, now, that these two facts,

— the dreams

— the ideas

are in close relation with a third element: the beliefs and the feelings of the Pyrenean peasants, present in my parents and ancestors; which I never rightly knew, from the conversation of my mother, until after I was 30, nor deeply understood before these last few days, when the shock of my father's death brought them up into full expression. Yet so far both my parents had rather despised these beliefs as superstitious.

THE SON (*meditates*): Thus the instincts of the race, manifest at first in the dreams of childhood, have developed later on into metaphysical ideas.

Far from being the products of culture or of rational intelligence, my ideas are but the translation into the intellect of the racial instincts already manifested in myself by dreams of infancy and in my parents by feelings, collective rather than individual, surviving even the wear and tear of civilization.

These instincts are shown in their conduct—more, indeed, in actions than even in beliefs.

It should be possible to trace them back yet further: to the instincts of the animal kingdom.

How closely the dreams and tales of the mother, and her dreams of reincarnation, specially correspond in form with the dreams of the son.

And also her actions, against the Germans or in her mountain home.

Her feelings, too, at the death of the father.

The Forms



The Son Meditates:

I. The Mountain :

Reincarnation.

The Return of the Dead.

II. The Sphere :

The perfect end of the father.

The victory over the Germans.

The hidden revolver.

III. The Stairway :

Re-incarnation.

The German Corporal.

The debt of the grandmother.

I. Death is the passing from the first mountain to the second. Upon the second, one finds another race of beings. The dead come back to seek the living, even as the dreamer goes back to seek his brothers.

Reincarnation is both the passage to another life after death and the coming-back amongst one's own people.

II. The death of the father brought him to the resolution of his differences with his wife; the revelation that all was well in the end, whatever the anguish; even as the sphere, despite the terror, arrives at a state of perfect enclosure within the cylinder.

Thus the end of the war resolves the statement of the mother: to be invaded is not to be conquered.

The affair of the revolver terminates also in perfection, through the intervention of the German soldier: the hostile

element accommodates itself, as in the dream, to the suffering element, and dissolves the terror.

III. The idea of reincarnation after death appears in the image of the stairway, which begins again after a void. When the mother takes the axe to the corporal, she is doing what the dreamer does, when he decides to cross the empty space. Also when she decides to trust the German soldier. And, similarly, the mother deciding to give her 500 francs to the old mother: overcoming the difficulty; making others overcome it.

In each case, in action, dream or thought, there comes a moment in which one reaches the end of fear.

The dream of the countess and the dream of the guide are later forms of the dream of the stairway. All are dreams of a crisis beyond which there is peace in joy.

The dream of the stairway is only the dream of the mountain, with more insistence upon the hiatus between the first and the second ascents.

The dream of the sphere has the same rhythm as the others: the resolution of the difficulty occurs when the sphere makes perfect contact with the tunnel, and appeasement follows.

In adolescence, these dreams transform themselves into ideas. From earliest infancy—probably from birth, for the dream of the sphere is doubtless a dream-memory of birth—the forms created in the human being have sought for concrete images, first in dreams and later in the abstract configurations of philosophic thought.

From the dream of the mountain has emerged the idea of a fall or death, and a resurrection. Desire, and sexual desire particularly, has its rise and fall, ending in a satisfaction. So have hunger, thirst, compassion.

This impulse leads to the idea that death, represented by the space between the two mountains, or the two stairways, or represented by the contact between the sphere and the

tunnel, is only a difficult entry into some resurrection better than life.

It is this impulse that makes it possible to leap beyond logic ; the intellect conducts us to a certain point, beyond which it is useless: to reach the solution we have to take a leap. Only by a leap do we attain reality. One has to abandon the last firm foothold ; one has to leap beyond the reach of thought. The dream of the sphere leads to the idea of the resolution of the ego: one must pass through the phase in which the sphere ceases to be, identifying itself with the funnel that becomes transformed into a cylinder. The difference between what we are, the sphere, and the world that surrounds us, is abolished. This is signified still more clearly by the dream of the guide, in which death is identified with triumph.

The obverse of this idea is the idea of God, which is the disappearance of the self replaced by a universal satisfaction, resolving the problem created by the contact of the dreamer with the obstacle. The ego disappears by an act of resolution, by a leap, an explosion.

The Dream and the Awakening



THE SON (*meditates*): Between 10 and 11 years of age, the dreamer knows sometimes that he is dreaming, and says to himself: 'It doesn't matter, this is only a dream.' In violent nightmares, however, this knowledge is not accessible. Sometimes he can wake himself at will. Then the dreamer has to go away into a dark corner, alone, and make an effort which awakens him. One instance: people come into the house and kill everybody except the dreamer, who sees himself as a little girl. She rushes to the lift and starts it. But the lift is stopped, and she is going to be killed; then she crouches in a corner of the lift, and awakes.

But this is possible only when the dreamer feels that the dream is going to be a terrifying one, before the most terrible moment has been reached. At the terrible moments the dreamer cannot wake himself up: the thought that his will could wake him does not come to him.

The Mystics



The mystic is the dreamer who knows that he dreams, and can make the effort, and awaken. The thinker is the dreamer who does not realize that he is dreaming, and does not know how to make the effort towards waking. During the moments of terror one can do nothing: too intense a pre-occupation with the feeling of the moment prevents the mind from standing away from itself and from the dream, prevents the mind from judging itself. In the dream one does not normally think of the awakening, one believes only in the dream. At some very rare moments in dreams, however, one knows. And thus, at some very rare moments of his life, the mystic knows.

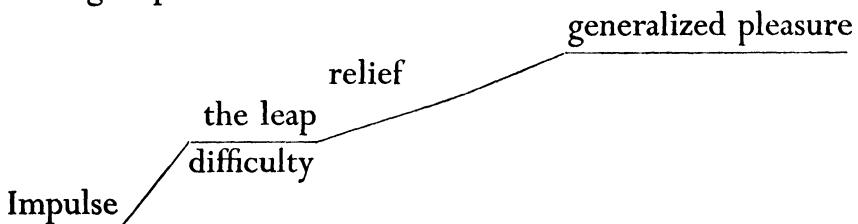
But even in ordinary dreams, the leap is taken. One passes over the chasm on the mountain, the gulf in the stairway, into a zone of happiness. That condition, when it is intensified, made conscious, is the awakening. Thus the self has to be abandoned, as the dream is abandoned on waking.

The One Form



THE SON (*meditates*): Ideas trace back to dreams; dreams are the clothing in images of an essential form, drawn from the life of the race.

An impulse, a desire in movement, encounters a fixed form. A shock results, or an adjustment, preceded by anguish, followed by relief and ending in a clear idea, in which the individuality of the first desire dissolves in a generalized feeling of pleasure.



The form thus schematized applies to birth, to dreams, to the sexual act, and to all the actions of desire, also to artistic creation, to the intellectual life, to action itself and to the religious life, and finally, by supposition, by a leap definitive and total, to life itself, to life eternal.

It is in dreams that we can best grasp this form, because a dream is just conscious enough to be retained by the memory and yet escapes the distortions imposed upon our primary impulses by the conditions of action and the needs of the intellect. It is in the normal—not the morbid—dream, that our fundamental desire for the first time takes cognizance of itself.

Life, the intellectual life especially, is but the attempt to realize and to satisfy, in innumerable circumstances, the first impulsion thus revealed, which is the most direct intuition of our being.

In all these cases, the dream is only the transposition of an action; of an action often repeated by the race and trans-

mitted to the infant: the act of jumping over, or across, a difficulty.

And the ideas will be but new transpositions, on a plane of superior subtlety, of this same essential action. This is the act of being born, which every living being accomplishes once at least; all dreams being, one may say, repetitions of the act of birth.

But certain beings, having accomplished this action once, without which they could not have existed, retain ever after the fear of undertaking it again, under any aspect whatever. Whence arise the philosophies of renunciation, of inaction, and refusal of life.

Other beings, on the contrary, learn by experience to renew this action, and to feel less and less fear when faced with the necessity of it.

One could classify all ideas and all systems of philosophy according to the degree of fear they contain, for they represent the diverse attitudes corresponding to different degrees of fear in action, from total renunciation to complete acceptance.

Ideas of the Son



Birth

The Dream of the Sphere: Concentration

I. ONTOLOGY: THE ACTUAL AND THE INACTUAL.

1. Every existence is infinite; every expression is limited. The expression of any thought or being is necessarily incomplete.
2. There are two parts in every being: the Actual, which is the expressed, and the Inactual, which is the unexpressed, and they grow together infinitely, the one out of the other.
3. The aim of every being is to express itself: to render as intense (as conscious), as possible, the desires which are its essence.
4. To express itself, Being has to concentrate on some chosen part of itself, and to reject other parts; thus, in its expression, Being divides and sub-divides itself into individuals.
5. Pain and Pleasure are the twin concomitants of creation, which is expression, which is division.
6. Pleasure is the self-consciousness of desire: the aim of every being.
7. Pain is the consciousness of the loss which accompanies the rejection by desire of part of itself in the course of expression.
8. There is in every being the instinct of concentration: of the necessity to choose and to reject.
9. Concentration in a Universe produces men; in a man, ideas.
10. The Inactual is common to all: individuals are concentrations of the one Inactual Being in different directions.

Life

The Dream of the Staircase: from plane to plane

II. COSMOLOGY: LANGUAGES AND CONVENTIONS.

11. Being expresses itself through languages.
12. Languages are established by Conventions, which are necessary collaborations of certain categories of beings to help each other in their expressions.
13. Matter is the language of desire on the plane of Universes.
14. Action is the language of desire on the plane of men.
15. In speech and art are the beginnings of the language of desire on the plane of ideas. (Most speech is action.)
16. Beings in their expression of themselves, modify the Inactual around them. As the Inactual is common to all, beings communicate with each other through their perception of the modification of the Inactual.
17. The senses are the powers which translate perceptions of the modifications of the Inactual into languages.
18. In the organization of the world, the pain which emanates from all creative activity is being perpetually rejected: partially non-expressed. A quantity of suffering accumulates in the Inactual, and tries to express itself through individuals. That is the Evil Element in the Universe: Evil is pain felt separately from its cause, creation.
19. The Conventions protect against evil those who belong to them.
20. Accidents are violations of Conventional laws. Such violations being outside the protection of the Conventions, entail suffering.

21. Man belongs to two Conventions:—The Universal Convention, which is the Material Convention: the Human Convention, which is the Moral Convention.
22. Man's specific work is to prepare the third Convention: the Convention of Ideas, which is the Metaphysical Convention.

Death

The Dream of the Mountain: downwards then upwards

III. PSYCHOLOGY: FALL AND RESURRECTION.

23. Existence entails responsibility.
24. Responsibility entails immortality.
25. Liberty is the power of expressing one's desires ; it is a concomitant of responsibility, and both are concomitants of existence itself.
26. As every being is infinite, liberty entails immortality.
27. The foundation in men of the World of Ideas is the beginning of an immortality which is continued in a different order of being.
28. When a desire has reached the highest intensity of which it is capable, it ceases and falls: Perfection is annihilation.
29. A fall is the return to the ever-unsatisfied Inactual, which re-fills the fallen being with new forces and resurrects it. Desire follows an infinite rhythm of rise, fall and resurrection.
30. There are two forms of Fall: sleep and death. In sleep a desire comes back as desire, in the same expression ; in death a desire gives up its former expression, and comes back on the next plane, sub-divided into ideas.
31. Ideas need a new language, as matter is too ponderous an expression for them. The formation of the world of ideas entails the death of the physical Universe.
32. The basis of all language is the elementary rhythm of the Inactual, the first rise and fall of desire. Thus, all language, all expression, is rhythm.

After Death

The Dream of the Countess

IV. ESCHATOLOGY: DESTINY.

33. Universes also reach perfection, and die, in the world of Ideas and the realization of the Metaphysical Convention.
34. Nothing is ever lost for the Inactual; and the Inactual never ceases from creating.
35. A fallen world is reproduced in new circumstances: that is, among new worlds which the Inactual has created during the fall-period of that world.
36. Every being reappears in and with its world, again and again in new circumstances.
37. There exists of each being a permanent Abstraction, which is its true imperishable essence: a plan of that being which life makes real again and again in varying circumstances.
38. There exists a Plan of all Abstractions, which is Destiny; but the Inactual is forever coming into the plan with new creations.
39. In Destiny the will, or desire of each being is completely accomplished.
40. Destiny is the Will of the Total Being, which is One: the One striving towards self-consciousness for ever, as its self-consciousness has its infinitude for object, and the Inactual grows with the Actual.

The One Form

V. ETHICS.

The duty of man is to be at once the discoverer and creator of Being, by reaching full self-consciousness.

41. *To understand* the will of the Total Being, and to understand that his own will is identical with it.
42. *To feel*, in pleasure, the development of the Total Being, and to bear, in pain, his own share of the suffering of Creation.
43. *To act*: to express in his languages the Total Being: that is, on man's plane, to resolve the desires given him into ideas; to carry out the Moral Convention; and to lay the foundations of the Metaphysical Convention.

The Life Beyond



Dialogue. The Son, The Mother

THE MOTHER: Then, what do you believe, yourself? That he is in heaven? That he is here? Where is he?

THE SON: I believe that something remains. Each time his eyes became clear again, he was the same, and spoke in his usual way, he understood everything; right to the end the whole of him was present.

THE MOTHER: Where is it? Where is he now, then?

THE SON: That is what one calls God. In your mind there remains always everything you have ever seen. You may remember it more or less, but it is always there. If nothing remained, you would have no mind.

THE MOTHER: I know; I remember everything always.

THE SON: Well, God is that which remembers all things. I believe that all we have been, from birth until death, is preserved entire and living in the clear mind of God. And when you die, you will find again all that you have known of him since the beginning. God remembers everything, and when one is dead one is God.

THE MOTHER: Then you do not believe that he is going on existing, all unhappy, somewhere else?

THE SON: No, he is in God, all of him present together in God's mind, all that he has done or thought from his birth to his death. After his death it is no longer he, it is God.

THE MOTHER: I understand. You find again all you ever were. All the evil too, so that is hell. The happiness that you have known and find again—that is heaven. But what if you have forgiven one another?

THE SON: That counts at the moment of forgiveness and after: and it softens the memory of evil.

THE MOTHER: Yes, it must be that something remains:

and therefore everything must remain; for God, at our birth, makes something happen, someone to be, where there was nothing before: it is much easier for him to preserve something that already is. He preserves everything. And of necessity there must be the Good God, otherwise there would be nothing. If there remained nothing, there would never be or have been anything. Since there is something, there is God, who has made everything and preserves everything for ever.

The End of Fear



THE MOTHER (*two days after the father's death*): And to think that now I feel no more fear of the dead! I, who all my life was afraid of them in the dark! And my poor daughter; I was so frightened of her, though I longed above all to see her again and ran everywhere I could think of at midnight to find her wherever I thought that she might be! I was near to dying of fear as I ran, yet I wanted so much to see her that I galloped in spite of the fear—and even it was the fear that made me gallop.

And now I walk about everywhere in the middle of the night and no longer feel any fear at all of the dead.

Because he—he protected me, always.

I have now a protector among the dead. A powerful protector. Now I shall get on better, there's no looking after him of a night any more. He no longer needs me, he is just rotting away.

It is strange! Now I want to live. I thought to myself I was sure to die because I didn't want to live: and now it seems to me that I want to live.

Death, you know, that is what nobody wants.

THE SON (*to himself*): Without that ending, they would not have known how much they loved one another, neither she nor he.

Now they have known it perfectly. The presence of death has caused them to gather together all their strength, and they were not frightened, they triumphed over death in themselves, their strength proved greater than their fear of death. **THE MOTHER** confronted the approaching death with all her forces, without knowing at first that it was

death, but right to the end without hesitation or any doubt of her own powers.

Moreover, their love revealed itself as stronger than their innumerable hatreds for each other.

Without suffering and death, one learns nothing. We should not know the difference between the visions of the intellect and the facts.

Only those ideas are acceptable that hold through suffering and death.

When the intellect intervenes, the idea is finished. Intelligence consists in halting at the brink of the ditch one has to jump. Indeed, logically, when one comes to an empty space, one ought to halt.

But life is that which leaps.

Intelligence is cowardice.

The one quality is courage: one attains to truth, as to life, by courage only. Courage to see all the risk, and jump.

Commentary

by

Neil Montgomery

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Commentary



'Man,' said Protagoras, 'is the measure of all things: of those which exist, and of those which do not exist.' The fundamental nature of reality is that it is a pattern, one single pattern which expresses itself in all things, in the suns and the stars, in the seas and the mountains, in the protoplasmic cell and the thoughts of man. But the fundamental pattern is never fully accomplished in any of these things, though it is inherent in them all, for the pattern itself grows and develops. It expresses itself in all things, and in a sense it is more real than any of its expressions, as a thought is more real than the words which clothe it, yet without them it does not exist. In its expressions it exists as the oak in the acorn, or the bird in the egg,—not actually but potentially. We must therefore divide reality into two parts, the expressed and the potential, or to use Professor Saurat's words, the Actual and the Inactual. The Actual and the Inactual grow together, each springing from the other. Man differs from all other things in that, in him the pattern begins to grow conscious of itself. Hence the dictum of Protagoras. The philosopher is he in whom the pattern is most self-conscious. But the ever-present danger of the philosopher is that for greater ease in contemplating the pattern, he is tempted to abstract it from reality. Like Plato he becomes so enamoured of the 'patterns laid up in heaven' that he tends to despise and disregard the reality of earth. Working on these abstracted patterns the intellect then weaves a structure which is not without delicacy and interest, but which tends to have very little relation to actual reality. Hence the constant need for the philosopher to confront his theories with reality. The harsh, uncompromising Actual alone chooses amongst the various possibilities conceived by the intellect, the only one which is

true. And there is no other kind of truth. In Saurat's words: 'Without suffering and death one learns nothing. We should not know the difference between the visions of the intellect and facts.'

In 1936 destiny set the stage for Saurat to test his metaphysical theories. His father died and he was faced with the task of making his metaphysics serve the ends of life, and supporting his mother in her irreparable loss.

Many years before, Saurat had formulated the theories expressed in the *Principia Metaphysica*. Here we can only add a brief commentary upon them.

All expression of the underlying pattern, whether in word or deed, is a matter of choice—of selection and rejection. Any expression which completely fulfils the pattern *ipso facto* ceases to be expression. It becomes one with the pattern and falls back from the Actual into the Inactual.

In choosing one form of expression all conflicting forms must be rejected. There is thus a growing mass of rejected possibilities in the Inactual, in the unexpressed. And these rejected possibilities try to express themselves—to actualize themselves. If, however, they succeed in doing so, they spoil or even destroy the chosen forms which are in the process of expression. Thus they cause suffering. The rejected possibilities are in fact the evil element in the Universe.

Thus, for instance, the newly found aid to material expression which we call motor transport has increased the inactual evil so formidably that it is now being actualized daily, as suffering and death at an alarming rate.

Fear is the feeling on the part of an individual that the inactual evil is about to express itself in him—that he is about to suffer or die. It is the great enemy of which each individual tries to rid himself. Perhaps the readiest and most instinctive way of doing this is to project the threatening evil away from oneself and on to someone or something

else. This is the function of anger. Hence the close association between fear and anger, and hence the facility in anger of those whom the inactual threatens—the sick, the wounded, the aged.

But this method of dealing with the evil is not very effective. Therefore other means have been devised. They are forms of co-operation. Individuals with similar desires bind themselves together against the evil. Each one supporting the expression of his fellows, the Evil finds itself faced not only with their separate efforts, but also by the unearned increment of association of the group. Each individual is protected by the group, and so long as he is content to live inside the group and obeys its laws, the Evil cannot express itself in him and he is safe.

Thus are Conventions formed. A Convention is merely a group such as we have been discussing. Safety and Comfort are the marks of the Convention. The conventional man is the comfortable man.

But the protection given by the Convention is only temporary. Sooner or later the individual must break the conventional laws whether he will or no, and then he will be abandoned by the Convention and given over to the Evil. At any point in his growth he may inadvertently break the conventional laws and suffer accordingly, and even if this does not happen, the essence of life is growth and expansion, and it may not forever be kept within the circle of any laws or regulations whatsoever. And so with regard to the universal Convention of Matter. Sooner or later every individual must break its laws. He must suffer and ultimately he must die.

We live in the Conventions as the child lives in its mother's womb. At a given stage of development this is healthy and necessary. But the time comes when the child must break the encircling and protective wall, and be born. If through fear we hang back from the consummation, the end is not

less certain, but we damage our own development. The philosopher, strong in truth can recognize these facts and face both birth and death undismayed.

‘Men must endure
Their going hence even as their coming hither:
Ripeness is all.’

Whatever the attacks of the inactual evil upon him, the wise man is not afraid and is not offended. Indeed he who has reached this stage has nothing more to learn of this life. He is ripe for death.

So far the metaphysician Saurat. But how will he explain all this to his sorrowing mother, who is an unlettered peasant woman of remarkable force of character and having all the tenacity and shrewd realism of the French peasant? In his epic poem *L'Actuel*, he has a similar situation where Plato is attempting by such reasonings to console the goddess Isis for the loss of her Lord Osiris. And Isis very naturally replies:

‘O rêveur, ta réponse est subtile et sans force,
Et ma peine est profonde et n’entend pas ta voix.’

Here we have the problem in its clearest terms,—the theories of the metaphysician confronted with the Actual in the form of Woman. But Saurat knows that it is the Actual which must choose. It is for the metaphysician to learn from reality, not *vice versa*. Therefore he listens and reflects while the Mother talks.

And in the intimate conversation between the mother and son in the week following the father’s death, the curious fact emerges that Saurat’s ideas are not really new to the mother. His metaphysical mind has developed them and given them form, but in embryonic form they have been in his mother’s mind for years, though he was unaware of this until they were driven to the surface by the shock of his

father's death. And the mother in her turn had inherited them from her ancestors. Here are a few examples:

The Mother knows that anger is the outlet of fear occasioned by suffering:

'We were both unhappy, because our daughter was dead and you had gone.'

Then each would accuse the other of anything, to make the other suffer, and the more miserable one is, the more one wants him to suffer too.

And the Mother also knows that the safety and comfort provided by the Convention soon become a hindrance to the development of life.

'I am the one for calamities; nothing else is worth taking notice of. Whenever things went successfully—well—there it was. I thought no more about it. Happiness is nothing really.'

Esquicha la vido.—Wear and tear. Wear it away, tear it away. That is all there is to life.'

Again, the Mother has lived through the German occupation on the Belgian frontier, and her terrible experience has taught her that the inactual evil is often exaggerated by the fear that precedes it. There is a tendency, overlooked by the fearful mortal, for even hostile reality to accommodate itself to some extent to our desires. Thus the German soldiers billeted on the Mother are kindly beings who help her against their common enemy the Kommandantur.

'You know, the Germans, they were not bad.'

For the rest, the Mother knows how to meet the hostility of the enemy with fortitude and firmness. As she replies to the Commandant who tells her that her country is conquered: 'No, Sir. It is invaded but it isn't conquered.' And when she is threatened with a revolver she replies with an axe with the same spirit with which she trod on the heads of the snakes at Ax-les-Thermes when she was a girl. 'You were taught not to be afraid of them: you took care to

tread on their heads, and then they coiled round your ankle and died.'

But even if one did make a mistake and get bitten, it didn't matter very greatly. The doctor was always at hand with his little knife to save one. Once more reality is found not to be so hostile as it appears; a thought which leads to the towering superstructure of hope that perhaps in the last analysis this is always so, and that the inactual evil after all is only a harmless phantom. Death may be equally benevolent as birth. The fear of death is inextricably linked in the peasant mind with the fear of the dead, and with the fear of darkness. Hence some very strange associations. The peasants avoid the dark except as a covering for excretory acts of which they are ashamed. Having no closets in their houses, they go outside at night to relieve themselves, and the dead, knowing this, are apt to come and seek them at such times, to the great terror of the peasants. But those whose love for the departed outstrips their dread, deliberately seek such rendezvous. Their terror makes their belief in the possibility of the coming of the dead a solid reality, so that it is their great terror which is their great hope.

And in the depths of the Mother's consciousness lie all the ancestral primitive beliefs about reincarnation. And the metaphysical son, contemplating the upheaval in his mother's mind of these strange antediluvian monsters, is astonished to recognize in them his own metaphysical ideas.

The underlying pattern of reality expresses itself in both sets of ideas, as also in the modes of action of the Mother, which have been inherited from and perfected by the experience of the race.

Nay more, Saurat, remembering the strange dreams which haunted his childhood, now realizes that the pattern tried to reveal itself to him, to express itself in his dreams long before his intelligence was sufficiently mature to understand it.

We are given a set of five dreams, three of which visited him frequently between the ages of 8 and 11, and two which occurred about the age of 40, which were only dreamed once, and which were evidently the conclusion of the childish dreams.

The first two dreams, the dreams of the Mountain and the Staircase, are variants on the same theme, while another and similar theme runs through the dreams of the Sphere, the Guide and the Countess.

A Freudian psycho-analyst would have no difficulty in interpreting these dreams. The last three are birth dreams, dreams of passing through the narrow gateway of life, and perhaps also dreams of sexual penetration. And as for the first two, ascents of mountains and staircases are well-recognized sexual symbols.

But here, as usual, the Freudian analysis fails to give satisfaction because of its inadequacy. No doubt the dreams fit neatly into a sexual framework, but there are many other frameworks into which they fit with equal ease. To Saurat himself, for instance, the symbolism of the dream of the Countess, which he dreamed about the age of 40, revealed itself in the half-wakened state. The Countess is Life. The little girl is the dreamer's own soul, and the passage down the well is as applicable to death as to birth.

The pattern expresses itself in sexuality as well as in all other things, but the sexual interpretation has no precedence over the others. As Saurat puts it, these dreams are:

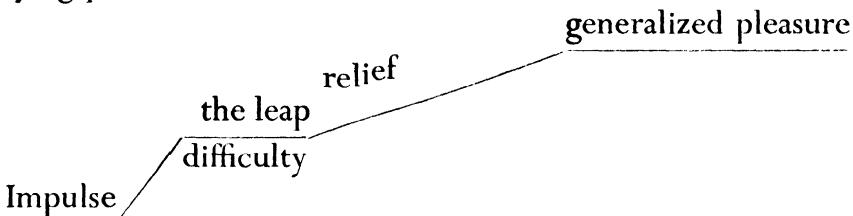
'In part, dreams of sexual penetration with liberation. More probably dreams of birth;—the infant's memory of its birth, persisting throughout childhood; dreams that are vivid before the awakening of sex and partially replaced by sexual life with its parallel rhythm; but also in part by the intellectual and literary life which also has this rhythm; research, difficulties, crisis of inspiration, blissful solution in the work of creation.'

'Memory of birth, premonition of sexuality and of inspiration, hope, and perhaps remembrance of a similar passage through death itself.'

Or again:

'Ancestral feeling, dreams, actions of the race or of the individual, and metaphysical ideas; different aspects of one and the same unity.'

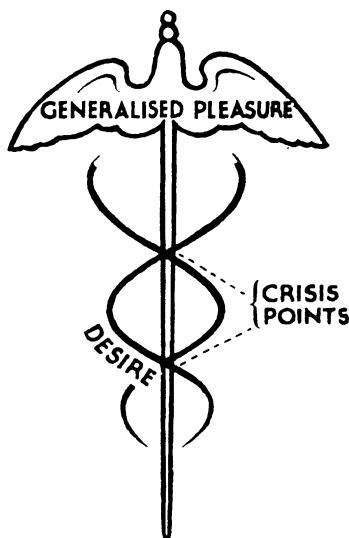
And Saurat now risks a diagram of this unity, of this underlying pattern:



It will be seen that he has chosen two typical steps out of an infinite series in the development of any impulse or desire. For having reached the plane of Generalized Pleasure, the desire must again reach the point when it must become particularized once more, when once again it must meet its crisis, and the necessity for leaping across the gap on to a still loftier plane of generalized pleasure.

And it is possible to modify Saurat's diagram so as to express this. Each desire develops along its own chosen line of expression until it reaches one of these points of crisis. There it must discard its expression, lose its form, and for the time being fuse with the unexpressed, the inactual, to be recrystallized later in a more subtle form. These recurrent crises are the points where ice changes into water, and water into steam, where a man parts from his mother and is born, or parts from the earth-mother and dies. Let us string these crises in one line of infinite length. Then we must picture the line of the development of desire as a twisted line enwreathing the straight line of crisis crossing and re-crossing it at various points. And as each desire develops in close relation with its polar opposite, like the joy and

anguish in the dreams, we shall have to show this by two curving lines. In fact we shall have to draw the Caduceus of Hermes Psychopompus, the Soul Guide. And our diagram will now be as follows:



Now if we regard this figure as a map, and imagine the individual travelling along one of the lines of desire and leaping the gap to reach a 'better world', we have a map of the dreams of the Mountain and the staircase. But we can also make the diagram into a model in relief, so to say. The serpents then disappear and are replaced by a hollow vessel with constrictions in its lumen at the points of crisis. It is a model of the birth passages, of the vagina and uterus, of the Great Womb of the World, which is fertilized by the Divine Afflatus, represented by the straight line; the Grail which is made Holy by the Logoic Power of the Spirit. And if we now regard the individual soul, or the individual world as a sphere, approaching the points of constriction, dissolving itself to pass through them, and recrystallizing afresh in the next world, we have the

diagrams of the dreams of the Sphere, the Countess and the Guide.

The Sphere actually appears in one of Saurat's Metaphysical Dialogues, *The Mechanisms of Destiny*, not yet published in English, in which the Actual is pictured as a sphere growing eternally in the midst of the Inactual, in the midst of a constant rain of inactual evil upon it—a rain of events which constitute its 'limits', its destiny.

And in the poem, *L'Actuel*, there is a fine description of the passage across one of the crisis points, one of the gaps of death and rebirth. Alma and Isis are seeking the future country of the Idea:

'In their flight towards the Idea, the Earth disappeared.
They themselves stretched towards the impossible end,
Disappeared to their inner intelligence;
And all human sounds in their minds were stilled.
And the whole of existence slowly revolved,
In its gyrations of infinite amplitude,
Round the Central Point immobile and constant.
And near the sacred place, Woman and Goddess united
In their common effort pierced the circular current
Of eternally moving Being,
And they touched the point at the centre of life.
Then all was changed. The world and Being disappeared.'

This, then, is the final truth about Life. It will lead us inevitably and continually to the point where we must let go, abandon safety and leap.

'The one quality is courage: one attains to truth, as to life, by courage only. Courage to see all the risk, and jump.'

It is the End of Fear. Intelligence, so useful in prudently organizing our lives, is useless here. Intelligence is cowardice. One must leave it and jump.

One must be prepared to abandon one's expressions at the given time. The many expressions change and pass, the One

pattern remains. Therefore all remain. The One pattern is the form of Perfect Being—of God, and thus Saurat hymns it in the last Canto of *L'Actuel*:

'Perfect Being, Who sail'st above the world,
So far beyond the reach of our waves
That Thou art to our senses as if Thou wert not,
Thou alone Who Art, Thou Who Wert, Thou Who Wilt
Be!

The Great Abstraction which leads our world,
And the Infallible Plan which our desires follow,
Is but Thy Will, permanent and fertile,
Illumining the past and creating the future.

And if Thou can't fall into ultimate sleep,
And only awake when the cycles are accomplished,
What are we, awake in Thee and tiny,
But Thy dream, passing in Thy slumber sublime?'

NEIL MONTGOMERY

